

NE NPR-A Amendment Planning Team
Bureau of Land Management (930)
222 West 7th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599
Attn: Northeast NPR-A Amendment Planning Team

196946

Re: Support for maintaining ``no-lease'' zone at the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area

Dear Sir or Madam:

1 I am writing to ask that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) continue to protect the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area (TLSA) by maintaining a ``no-lease'' zone there. Specifically, I request that such zone include the 588,998 acres of the Teshekpuk Lake Surface Protection Area protected under the previous administration. I also request that an additional 93,000 acres, just southeast of the lake, also be given protected status. The whole TLSA area is a region of significant biological importance and needs to be protected.

2 While I recognize the need oil and gas development in the more general National Petroleum Reserve (NPR), the BLM has a responsibility to safeguard the nation's ecological resources. I ask that exploration not be done in biological sensitive areas.

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Basic

I also see no reason at this time that such a critically important biological region should be threatened by unnecessary exploration. The amount of technically recoverable oil in the NPR is estimated by the USGS to be between 6 billion and 13 billion barrels, at 95% and 5% confidence levels respectively. As the actual amount of recoverable oil is usually less than what is technically recoverable, this is not much oil – it is comparable to the estimates for the Arctic Wildlife Refuge.

4

We would be better served by increasing the fuel efficiency of our automobiles and trucks than to extract that small amount of oil while potentially damaging an important biological region. In addition, while the gas potential in the NPR is substantial, the United States is currently experiencing an *excess* of natural gas. More natural gas is not needed.

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Special
Designation

Many species of birds and mammals depend this area for their survival. Alaska's largest caribou herd, millions of migratory shorebirds, and one of the world's densest populations of nesting birds of prey can all be found here. The threatened species, the Stellar's Eider, depends on the TSLA and other sites within the National Petroleum Reserve (NPR) for nesting. For the yellow-billed loon the only significant breeding area in the world occurs within the NPR. The TSLA is also important for tens of thousands molting geese and ducks, as it provides them with crucial habitat for feeding and resting before they begin their annual migration south. Twenty percent of the world's population of Pacific Brandt geese visit this place to molt.

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Opening the TLSA and nearby areas to oil development will adversely affect its fragile environment and unique wildlife. This is one of the conclusions found in the National Research Council's 2003 report on cumulative effects of oil and gas development in the NPR.

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Birds

As an example, one primary concern is for the birds that nest there. For the yellow-billed loon, it is known that increased egg predation by scavengers, loss of fish for diet, exposure to petroleum products caused by spills, and changes in water levels in nesting lakes, are all associated with oil development.

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Monitoring

In addition to the above concerns, the National Research Council's report on the impact of industrial development within the NPR highlighted the lack of enough ``benchmark'' areas free from industrial presence. Such areas would be crucial for assessing the impact of industrial development within the NPR, allowing for a comparison of wildlife and flora between areas affected and unaffected by development. The TLSA with a `no-lease' status could have such a research value.


009
Planning

In addition to the obvious scientific and associated economic merits of protecting the TLSA, there is an important cultural reason for protecting this area: that locations *where the wild things are* still exist.

I ask that you please maintain the ``no-lease'' restrictions for the TLSA.

I can be reached at (626)-793-8832 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,


Michael Graesser
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Pasadena, CA 91106